

QUESTIONS ASKED DURING 2013 RFP PROCESS - *answers remain relevant*

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

We submitted a Business District Support (BDS) proposal in the past for multiple activities and were not awarded a grant for any of the activities. Can we resubmit this year for any of these non-funded activities? Likewise, we submitted a proposal in the past to the Business Association Assistance Program (BAAP) and some of the activities were not funded. Can we resubmit for the unfunded activities?

Yes, you may submit a proposal for any eligible activity, but think carefully first. If your proposed activities weren't competitive in prior years, it is unlikely the same activities will be competitive this year unless you can strengthen the case. We expect this round of funding to be as competitive, if not more competitive, as last year.

Would an update of previously-funded activities be rated poorly? An update to past activities will not necessarily be rated strongly or poorly. What will make the difference is your ability to make a compelling argument for how the proposed update provides a direct benefit to businesses, propels your organization's initiatives forward, and why other funding sources (member dues, user fees, et cetera) are unlikely to fully fund it this year and whether they might be able to in future years.

Would an activity such as the wrapping of utility boxes be eligible? The wrapping could be considered a streetscape element and/or artwork but it also is a vehicle for marketing and branding.

I understand that wrapped utility boxes can have a degree of marketing and branding, but it is more like a streetscape element, and thus is ineligible.

Would a proposal requesting funding to plan a long-term, outdoor sculpture walk be eligible?

Yes, but for such a proposal to be competitive it will be important to make a very strong case for how the outcomes of how the sculpture walk will produce meaningful benefits to businesses and increased economic activity for the area. Additionally, it will be critical that the proposal demonstrate how the capital costs associated with the project would be paid for by other sources and how there is a sure model for the activity becoming self-sustaining in one to two years.

Are monies to install way-finding signage as a district-wide marketing and branding campaign eligible?

Way-finding signage does have a marketing and branding element, but signage is still a streetscape element and therefore ineligible.

Can we apply for monies to assist with/support an existing farmers market? It appears as though the Great Streets Program has funded other markets around the city.

A proposal to support an existing farmers market could be eligible, but it would be very important to carefully consider what activities you would propose and why. The program has provided funding to help establish a farmers market on West Broadway primarily to draw customers to the business district more broadly. The BDS program is very competitive and it is important to think carefully if there's a specific activity that cannot be paid for with revenue from stall fees, but would benefit the businesses. Activities that establish connections between customers visiting the market and area businesses would be most

attractive. As with all Great Streets-supported activities, basic operating support for an existing market is not eligible.

Can the monies be used to upgrade/improve our organization's website?

Yes, updating or improving an organization's website is an eligible activity, but you would need to make a compelling case for how an improved website benefits businesses, drives traffic, increases sales, et cetera in your business district. The Business District Support RFP is very competitive, and activities that do the most to strengthen the economic health of business districts and build mechanisms for continued investment will rank highest.

We are wondering about how the monies can be used for networking opportunities? Could you give me some examples? We host a monthly business forum that includes lunch. We charge a fee for businesses to attend, but the fee doesn't always cover the total cost of the lunch. Can the funds be used to pay the extra expense?

In order to score well, networking proposals show a unique need, specific to a group of businesses or business district. While BDS program funds can be used to pay for event refreshments or food, we do expect to see event fees or other funds leveraged.

What activities does the Small Business Technical Assistance Program (B-TAP) support?

B-TAP funds one-on-one consultation, trainings, and business networking opportunities with three express outcomes:

- (1) to develop new businesses (up to \$5,000/new business created);
- (2) to make a significant contribution to individual business growth that must result in (a) new jobs, (b) a physical expansion, or (c) substantial sales growth (\$5,000/business); and
- (3) to retain existing jobs and businesses (\$50/hr, maximum 10 hrs/business).

BUDGET

What are "leveraged funds?"

Leveraged funds are all non-Great Streets dollars that you have received or can reasonably expect to receive (dues, fees, other grants, in-kind donations, volunteer hours, SSD funds, et cetera) and ear-marked for the specific activity you are proposing. For example, if you propose to host a workshop for businesses and plan to charge \$20 for non-members and \$10 for members and you expect 30 members and 20 non-members to attend then you'll have \$700 of leveraged funds committed to the activity.

How should we show intern, staff, and consultant costs on the Budget document?

Time spent by staff, interns, and volunteers on proposed activities should be included in the Budget document. Include their time and the hourly rate they are paid, but note that Great Streets contracts won't reimburse over a maximum of \$20/hr for interns and \$50/hr for staff. All volunteer, leverage hours should be set at \$21.91. For consultants' time there is no maximum, as an architect's time will be valued differently than a broker's or a graphic designer's. Additionally, some consultants charge a flat rate for product delivery, rather than an hourly rate. Proposal review will consider the market rates for different consultant services when evaluating the consultant rates proposed in the Budget.

If a business or property owner allows us to use their space or donates food for an event, can we include the market price for those as leverage?

Yes.

How is a volunteer's time weighted in the Leverage criteria?

The Leverage criterion is worth 10 points out of the 50 possible. We will consider all of the leverage presented in the budget and accompanying narrative, including, but not limited to the volunteer time, when assigning a value to the Leverage.

On the budget spreadsheet, should the Total Sources and Total Uses be the same number?

Yes.

OTHER

We have an open Great Streets BDS contract. Can we submit a proposal this year if we haven't finished those activities?

Yes, but given the competitive environment for BDS funds, it is wise to submit invoices for all completed work under previous contracts prior to the February 27, 2014 proposal deadline. As stated in the RFP, "organizational and consultant performance under previous City contracts will be considered" in proposal evaluations.

How is past performance evaluated?

An organization's past performance under previous city contracts will be weighed as one component to the 10 points total for the Capacity criterion. Reviewers will have a list of organizations that have received previous city contracts and a basic review of how well they executed the contract.

Would letters from our businesses supporting the proposal activities and our organization's involvement in organizing the businesses be appropriate?

Yes, but letters of supportive carry more weight when they articulate the actual activities proposed, rather than being very general in nature and simply stating that they support an organization's work.

Can City personnel, such as Crime Prevention Specialists, write letters of support?

Yes, support letters from individuals with expertise in an area that pertains to proposed activities would be relevant and helpful to proposal reviewers. General support letters that simply state that they approve of an organization's work will be accepted, but will not add as much credibility to the proposal as a letter that specifies why the author supports the specific activities proposed. For instance, if a Crime Prevention Specialist writes a letter that specifically notes how proposed activities have lowered crime rates or vandalism in other cases, it will be helpful to see that support.

Part of our proposal involves workshops run by hired consultants. Can we say "date to be determined" for when the workshops will take place?

Yes.

At this time, we also cannot provide an absolute cost of our printing/ mailing needs or the costs of a consultant. Are estimates acceptable?

Yes.

Could you please provide some examples of deliverables organizations have provided for their work in past contracts?

We recognize that the work products themselves require time, energy, and money, so program deliverables are balanced between payment for those products and the outcomes achieved by the work. Examples of a “product” deliverable would be a physical pitch packet or an event agenda and sign-in sheet. Examples of “outcome” deliverables would include an increase in Facebook activity for member businesses or the number of new and retained members. Below are examples of each type of deliverable from 2012 contracts. We’re always looking for new ways to measure the impact of this work, so don’t let this list limit your ideas.

Product Deliverables

- Number of participants at an event and examples/description of how the event was marketed
- List of businesses contacted/invited to participate in a program and those who participated
- Examples of marketing materials and copies of ads, articles, et cetera
- List of prospective businesses and developers contacted and status of communications
- List of properties contacted about assistance available and status of communications
- Printed examples of logos or other marketing materials developed

Outcome Deliverables

- Website use available from Google Analytics, Twitter trending, Facebook activity, screenshots
- Number of new members and retained members
- Survey results and copy of survey instrument
- Copy of signed commitment letter or lease and description of how tenant was “landed”

QUESTIONS ASKED DURING 2014 RFP PROCESS

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Our main street is being impacted by two different street projects over a several year period. Can we submit one application for technical assistance, or studies, or strategies and program ideas that facilitate business mitigation and look at both street projects?

Yes, as long as the focus of the assistance, studies, or activities is to enhance and strengthen neighborhood business district vitality. Different activities proposed by one organization can all be submitted in one proposal.

Can you clarify what types of events are ineligible community events and what types of promotional events are eligible business marketing events?

All one-time, annual events are ineligible. For other events, please call Rebecca Parrell (612-673-5018) to discuss the specifics.

I understand that capital improvements like street furniture and banners are ineligible. What about planning studies or design work to support future implementation of streetscape or place-making investments in commercial areas?

Planning studies and design work are eligible activities. However, in order to be competitive it is important to fully explain how the plan or design will have an impact on the business district and positively impact the businesses themselves. If the plan or design needs to be implemented in order to be effective, which is true for most plans and designs, it is critical to describe how the implementation will occur and how the implementation will be financed.

BUDGET

Are copies of previous year budgets and applications available for review as we prepare our applications?

The Example 1 and Example 2 worksheets on the Budget Excel file are actual examples from 2013 submissions. Examples from prior year's written answers can be provided upon request. Call Rebecca Parrell (612-673-5018) to discuss which types of proposals might be most useful for you organization to review based on the activities you are considering.

Are reports from previous years of Great Streets BDS funding awards available to provide examples of funded projects and approaches?

A [spreadsheet](#) listing what was funded in 2014 is available on the City's webpage. Staff recognizes that highlighting successful projects from past years is a valuable idea and will work to incorporate highlighting those into the webpage and via other mechanisms in the coming year. If you have suggestions for how to best accomplish this or would like to help structure how to highlight successful work your organization accomplished under a Great Streets BDS grant, please contact Rebecca Parrell, she would love to hear from you!

Can you clarify the two ways that the 15% administrative fee can be included I the grant budget?

1. If there is a line item for staff costs in a project, then do not calculate a 15% administrative fee. Be sure to include all staff costs related to performing the work in the staff costs line.
2. If a project does *not* include any staff time because consultants, volunteers, interns, or others are performing all the work, then use the 15% administrative fee line to calculate the additional project cost that would go to the organization for coordinating the work of the others.

How is this fee determined if not all of the activities in the grant require staff time?

The fee can be calculated just for those project totals that do not have staff costs included in them.

If there is a partial award and only part of a project is funded, will an organization still get the 15% administrative fee?

If a proposal requests \$20,000 for an activity, but is only funded for \$15,000, a 15% administrative fee calculated because there are no staff costs included would drop from 15% of \$20,000 to 15% of \$15,000.

Will you review our budgets before we submit the final grant application and provide feedback?

If you email your draft Budget worksheet to [Rebecca Parrell](#) she will be able to quickly review it for significant math or formula errors, but will not be able to provide feedback on content.

If we are assuming responsibility for and providing other funding for activities like business association newsletters and websites that were previously funded by BDS grants, but are not asking for funding for those activities in this proposal, can we use the costs of those projects as "leverage" in our grant application when we request funding for new activities.

No. Do not include leverage dollars in the Budget Spreadsheet for activities that do not have a Great Streets funding request. Use the narrative question responses to speak to how your organization funds other work without Great Streets funding.

What are examples of the leverage ratios that you are looking for when considering funding projects? How does the amount of leverage influence whether or not proposals are funded?

There is not a hard and fast leverage ratio to split proposals into those that receive funding and those that do not. Many factors are considered when ranking proposals, and leverage is just one. If a proposal ranks very highly in five of the six categories but has little-to-no leverage, it may still be funded because of high scores in the other five categories. Whereas a proposal with great leverage and low scores in other categories may not get funded.

OTHER

What if partnerships are just coming together, and are not really formalized? Is it better to apply together or for one organization to provide contracted services to another?

Answering this question can be different for different groups and different areas. It is neither better nor worse to apply together or as a single entity, but rather to consider what structure will best achieve your desired outcomes given all the factors you are aware of. What is important is to demonstrate to those reviewing the proposals through your narrative answers, that your group feels the structure chosen is best.

How do I submit the online application form?

Once you have fully completed this *Proposal Submittal Form*, email a pdf copy of it by Thursday, February 27, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. to Rebecca Parrell at rebecca.parrell@minneapolismn.gov. Include as a second attachment to the email a completed Budget using the template provided as [Exhibit A of the RFP](#). The Excel Budget file has a blank worksheet to use as a template, as well as Example 1 and Example 2 worksheets that provide two examples of correct Budget formatting. Any letters of support should be attached to the same proposal submittal email as well. You will receive a courtesy email response indicating what was received within 24 hours of receipt or by 4:30 p.m. on February 27, 2014. If you have any submittal questions, please call Rebecca Parrell at 612-673-5018.

What if a proposal covers several geographic areas?

That is just fine. A proposal can serve as many or as few areas as needed to accomplish the outcomes and impact described in the proposal. If you have questions about how to narrow or broaden your area, contact Rebecca Parrell (612-673-5018).

What is the total amount of BDS funding available in 2014?

The exact amount can change depending on the proposals received. In 2013 we funded \$397,000. We anticipate funding approximately \$350,000 in 2014.